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ARSHT CENTER EXPANDS ITS ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAMS WITH MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Throughout its 15-year history, the Center has remained a leader in arts education by providing free programs to more than half a million students

Miami, FL – September 14, 2021 – Since opening in 2006, the **Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County** ([@arshtcenter](https://www.arshtcenter.org)) has offered 10+ signature education programs and free arts opportunities to more than half a million students across South Florida. For its 15th Anniversary, the Arsht Center expands those offerings once more with the introduction of *I am Me*, a free theater and hands-on arts-making workshop experience for teens focusing on mental health awareness. The program, launching in the 21-22 school year, is part of the Center's ongoing partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) and will be available to every 9th grade student and teacher in Miami-Dade County.

I am Me is the culmination of the Center's Learning Through the Arts partnership with MDCPS, which also includes access to made-for-elementary-school musicals *Rock Odyssey* (established in 2010) and *Kitty Hawk* (established in 2017) as well as hands-on STEAM workshops and specialized curriculum. Everything, including busing of students to the Arsht Center, is provided free to schools and students through the generosity of Arsht Center supporters.

I am Me is currently in development and will tour high schools all over Miami-Dade County beginning in 2022. A wholistic program that goes beyond performance, *I am Me* also includes services created to engage students in their high schools beyond the free performance experience. After the performance has visited each school, the Arsht Center will integrate teaching artists into MDCPS afterschool wellness clubs to help students process what they saw on stage and what they are faced with in real life. It will also amplify the arts as an important mechanism for self-expression and self-care.

“As our students return to school after a long period of isolation and stress due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Arsht Center hopes to introduce the arts to students as a tool for healing and processing stress. We believe the arts have a positive effect on everyone, especially our youth, and we are offering *I am Me* as one way for students to

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help enhance their mental health and overall wellbeing this year," said Jairo Ontiveros, vice president of education and community engagement at the Arsht Center.

In addition to *I am Me*, the Arsht Center continues its commitment to delivering high-quality arts-based learning experiences for free to 60,000 students in the coming year, as it has for well over a decade. Encompassing theater, music, dance and spoken word, the Arsht Center's diverse education programming strives to engender a love of the arts and lead students to creative exploration and self-discovery.

Additional Arsht Center Arts Education Programs offered for 21-22 include:

LEARNING THROUGH THE ARTS

As the Arsht Center's flagship arts integration program, [Learning Through the Arts](#) uses live theatrical performances as the primary path for learning traditional subjects and has reached more than 325,000 MDCPS students since its inception in 2010. Programs include *Rock Odyssey*, *Kitty Hawk* and *I am Me*.

ROCK ODYSSEY VIRTUAL October 2021

[Rock Odyssey](#), the Arsht Center's theatrical interpretation of Homer's *The Odyssey*, will be presented virtually for the first time. The show will be available for all grade levels throughout October 2021 and will be paired with a professional-development workshop that will prepare teachers with related curriculum in advance of the presentation.

Click [here](#) to watch a video of students reacting to experiencing *Rock Odyssey* at the Arsht Center.

KITTY HAWK In-person late spring 2022; Available virtually in late 2022

[Kitty Hawk](#) is a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) program that shares the story of the Wright brothers' world-changing discovery of human flight with all seventh graders from MDCPS. Along with a live, Broadway-style musical, the *Kitty Hawk* initiative offers an arts-integrated curriculum and free workshops for teachers and students.

Click [here](#) to watch a video of the making of *Kitty Hawk* and [here](#) to watch how the STEAM workshops help students soar.

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I am Me

January 2022 - May 2022

Premiering in January, ***I am Me*** is the first arts-driven, youth mental health awareness program of its scale in the nation. A theater and hands-on workshop experience, *I am Me* will tour within Miami-Dade County Public high schools to reach all ninth graders. The program aims to destigmatize and raise awareness about mental health among teenagers, while offering them an inroad to resources for coping through the performing arts.

Quote from students who attended reading workshop of ***I am Me***:

- “It can’t be downplayed how much seeing oneself represented in art can encourage and inspire. I saw myself reflected in this play.” – 15-year-old high school student from MDCPS.
- “During the reading and workshopping of [*I am Me*], I felt sympathy, concern and finally hope and affirmation.” – 15-year-old high school student from MDCPS.

JAZZREACH DOCUSERIES

Now - May 2022

This new docuseries features jazz greats Kenyon Harrold, Alexa Tarantino, Miki Yamanaka and others. Free for MDCPS middle and high school students and teachers, the program will be available virtually through May 2022.

ACCESSING THE ARTS

September 2021 - May 2022

This program offers inclusive transformational and cultural arts experiences for all students, including children with disabilities.

Throughout the 2021-2022 season, students with disabilities from MDCPS receive arts instruction in this nationally recognized program. In partnership with Arts4All and MDCPS, the Arsht Center implements nationally recognized, inclusive residencies designed to integrate the performing arts into classroom for students with varied disabilities. For the culmination of the program, students are invited to make their Arsht Center debut with a performance on our stages.

MIAMI-DADE ARTS EDUCATION COLLECTIVE

September 2021 - May 2022

Created in 2020 to provide virtual arts education programs for students during the COVID-19 pandemic, the collective includes the Arsht Center, South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts

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Center, Miami Theater Center and Culture Shock Miami. In its first season, the collaboration served more than 80,000 students. For the 2021-22 season, four virtual and two in-person events will be offered to all Miami-Dade County schools and teachers. These include *Duke*, a story about Duke Kahanamoku, Hawaii's first Olympic gold medalist and the grandfather of modern surfing; and *Dreamers*, an immigrant story told through storytelling, toy theater, collage, and video projections.

KNIGHT MASTERWORKS CLASSICAL CONVERSATIONS

October 21, 2021 - March 10, 2022

One hour prior to each performance in the Knight Masterworks Classical Music series at the Knight Concert Hall, local musicians, professors and historians will free offer lectures that provide insight into the musicians, composers and history of what they will hear in the concert. Everyone is welcome (concert ticket is not required).

JAZZ ROOTS: SOUND CHECK

November 5, 2021 - April 8, 2022

This program welcomes high school students from MDCPS to the Knight Concert Hall for free sound checks, lectures and, on occasion, opportunities to perform with headline artists from the Center's Jazz Roots concert series. Participants also receive free admission to that evening's Jazz Roots concert, provided free of charge by the Arsht Center.

Throughout the program's history, students have participated with jazz legends such as **Chris Botti, Chucho Valdés, Candy Dulfer, Aaron Neville and the Dirty Dozen Brass Band** to name a few. Click [here](#) to watch a behind the scenes video of students experiencing a sound check with the **Pete Escovedo Orchestra**.

ARSHT GOES TO SCHOOL - BEYOND BOUNDARIES

December 2021 - April 2022

MDCPS students can attend free performances by Nu Deco Ensemble and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at the Arsht Center. In-classroom workshops are also part of the program. Offerings for 21-22 include: Nu Deco Ensemble, December 10, 2021 and April 29, 2022; and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, February 25, 2022. More will be added to the calendar at a later date.

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Image of students enjoying a performance of Rock Odyssey – Photo by Justin Namon, ra-haus



Image of 5th graders experiencing the thrill of Rock Odyssey at the Adrienne Arsht Center – Photo by Eyeworks Production



Image of Accessing the Arts Final Performance – Photo by Manny Hernandez



Image of student Alejandro Cruz playing a note for jazz saxophonist Candy Duffer during Jazz Roots Sound Check – Photo by Justin Namon, ra-haus

To download high-resolutions versions of the photos above, click [here](#).

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*All programs, artists, ticket prices, availability, dates and times are subject to change without notice. Visit arshtcenter.org for up-to-date information.

The Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County is made possible by the public support of the Miami-Dade County Mayor and the Board of County Commissioners, the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Tourist Development Council and the City of Miami Omni Community Redevelopment Agency, as well as the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture. The Adrienne Arsht Center also receives generous support from individuals, corporations and local, state and national foundations.

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About Us

Set in the heart of downtown Miami, the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County is committed to welcoming and connecting ALL people to the arts, to the Arsht

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Center and to each other. Our stages are alive year-round with artists from around the world, innovative programming from our resident companies and local arts partners, free community events that reflect Miami's unique identity and arts education experiences for thousands of Miami children each year.

Since opening in 2006, the Arsht Center, a 501C3 non-profit organization, has been recognized as a catalyst for billions of dollars in new development in the downtown area, a leader in programming that mirrors South Florida's diversity, a host venue for historic events and Miami's hub for arts education.

Each year, we serve more than 60,000 young learners and offer more than 100 culturally diverse and inclusive education programs — many enhanced by the Arsht Center's relationship with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, local teaching artists and Miami-based arts organizations.

The Arsht Center is also a home stage for three resident companies — Florida Grand Opera, Miami City Ballet and New World Symphony — and a launch pad for local artists to make their mark on the international stage. Our 300+ events each year include the Center's Signature Series of classical, jazz, Broadway, local theater and much more. We present a robust series of touring Broadway musicals direct from New York, the largest jazz series in South Florida, a major annual Flamenco Festival and an award-winning Miami-based theater program. In addition, our Family Fest, Free Gospel Sundays, CommuniTea LGBTQ+ celebration and Heritage Fest are among dozens of free events that bring together people from all corners of our community. For more information, visit arshtcenter.org.